THE BUSY BODY.

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Tentanda via eſt, quâ me quoque poſſim
Tollere humo, victorque virûm volitare per ora.

VIRG.

AS I brought into the world a remarkably active diſpoſition of mind, ſo, in the courſe of my adventures, I let ſlip few occaſions of improving my circumſtances to the beſt advantage. I always felt within myſelf a laudable ambition of acquiring an honeſt fame, and was firmly determined to employ all proper means conducive to that deſirable end. Horace and common ſenſe had taught me, that without a competent ſhare of fortune, my other qualities would only appear in a more ridiculous light; that learning would afford a ſubject of contempt, and the moſt refined virtue be expoſed to the raillery of vice, and indig-

indignation of pride. During theſe reflections, I received no ſmall encouragement from the example of my fellow-ſubjects, many of whom, with vulgar abilities, had raiſed themſelves on the wheel of fortune, to the moſt conſiderable employments of the ſtate. Wherefore ſhould I deſpair, ſaid I, of obtaining the favours of the fickle goddeſs, when I behold a cloud of Tradeſmen, who by attending an obſcure compter, have heaped up immenſe treaſures, riſen to be chief magiſtrates of a powerful people, and extended their influence to the remoteſt parts of the globe? But here one obſtacle ſeemed to intervene.

The delays attending a mercantile life, though ſecure of ſucceſs, were apt to cramp a haſty genius in a full career; and a ſpeedier method of attaining my wiſhes I thought more eligible. I examined the uſual practice of our modern ſages, who have the ſecret of creating, in a few years, immenſe eſtates out of nothing; but found withal ſuch unwarrantable proceedings among the brokers, ſuch knavery in the various branches of the law, that the moſt abject poverty, accompanied with innocence, apppeared in my eyes infinitely preferable to the gilded ſtatues of the 'Change, or the majeſtic edifice of Weſtminſter-Hall. The inſtructors of my youth, among other romantic ſtories, had often entertained my mind with the bold attempts, which ſome eminent philoſophers had made towards the diſcovery of the longitude. No topic ever ſo affected my imagination, which was now elevated by the pompous rewards, which crowned heads and maritime republics had offered to the diſcoverer of ſo important a ſecret. I took a ſteady reſolution of employing a few years in performing experiments, that would tend to perfect navigation, would load me with riches, and pertuate my name to the lateſt poſterity. After a ſerious peruſal of Euclid's Elements, and Halley's Obſervations, and collecting what uſeful remarks are ſcattered through the Hiſtory of the Royal Society, I proceeded to ſea, where

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my endeavours were attended with ſo much ſucceſs, that I obtained a pompous certificate, ſigned by an admiral, three captains of men of war, and a mathematical Profeſſor, who repeated to me theſe flattering words, *this will do, this will do.*

My next care was to get ready my diſpatches, to be ſpread over Europe, and make application for a recompence, I had ſo juſtly deſerved; but happening one Night to be in Company with an old Captain of a Merchant-Man, and turning the converſation on my favourite Topic, he oppoſed ſuch unanſwerable proofs to my feeble Arguments, that I entirely abandoned my raſh Project, which I am informed, has ſince been reſumed by a modern Virtuoſo.

Sir Isaac Newton, often declared this diſcovery muſt be owing to the Idiotiſm of a Fool, or to the effect of blind Chance. This remark flattered my vanity; and my diſappointment, however unexpected, only ſerved to excite my curioſity in ſearch of Truth, in matters of greater probability. Having obſerved in many profound writers, that vaſt progreſs had been made in unravelling the grand *Arcanum* of nature by the ſagacious Raymond Lulli, the penetrating Albertus Magnus, and innumerable others of later date, I eſteemed it a laudable ſcheme to add ſomething to their inventions, and give the finiſhing Stroke to a work which they had left improveable and in a ſtate of Imperfection. For this purpoſe, I erected a curious Laboratory well provided with furnaces, alembics, and retorts, and expended twenty Guineas in the purchaſe of Metals, to which I intended to communicate the genuine colour, weight, and malleability of pure Gold: I performed ſundry operations, which though attended with conſiderable expence, I conſidered as the infallible ſource of an immenſe Treaſure, and overlooked preſent inconveniences at the raviſhing proſpect of the golden Mines, that were gaping under my Hands. I eſteemed myſelf the only wiſe man in the kingdom, looked upon the Geometrician over his lines as a peaſant plowing

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up a barren ſoil; the Aſtrologer in the ſkies as a raving mad man; and condemned them both to opprobrious contempt and abject want. I ſmiled at the miſtaken notion of the Vulgar, who denominate a Perſon rich from the poſſeſſion of one hundred or two hundred thouſand Pounds. Theſe agreeable ideas ſo filled my imagination, that one Morning after having planned during the whole night, the future conduct of my Life, I roſe with the higheſt ſpirits, and proceeded ſtrait to Long-Acre, where I purchaſed a ready-made Chariot for the ſum of one hundred and twenty Guineas, which I promiſed to pay, by note, three months after date, ſingled out four coach Horſes at thirty Guineas each, and took an houſe in Soho-Square, at the yearly rent of fourſcore Pounds. But foreſeeing the inconveniency of depoſiting an immenſe Treaſure in a private Houſe, I directly went to Chancery-Lane, in order to employ an Attorney, to buy me a landed Eſtate of ſix thouſand Pounds per annum, and lay out ten times that ſum at the higheſt intereſt then current. I found this crabed Member of the Law leſs complaiſant and more diffident, than the former Perſons, I had applied to. It's true I had not abated one penny of their demands; but then the premium I offered Mr. *Gripewell*, was far from being inconſiderable. I now ſuſpect, that he took offence at an old full-trimmed black Coat, which I then wore; a brown Perriwig without Powder, and marvelous foul Linnen. I eaſily perceived his ſurprize, and requeſting the favour of his Company for half an hour, which he complied with, conducted him to the Seven Dials, when he condeſcended to crawl up three pair of ſtairs to my philoſophical Habitation, on a ſuppoſition, as he afterwards declared, that I might be an old Uſurer, poſſeſſed of immenſe ſums of Money. The aſtoniſhment he betrayed at this odd ſight, is inexpreſſible; it broke out into violent fits of anger and indignation, which accompanied with convulſive agitations of his body, overſet my pots and deſtroyed all my apparatus in a chamber, that was not

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above three yards in length, and as many in breadth. In vain did I exert all my eloquence to prove the force of art and cite Boyle and Rouelle to demonſtrate the tranſmutability of metals; he ran or rather precipitated himſelf down the ſtair-caſe, leaving me in a moſt tattered condition, and half deſpairing of the ſucceſs of my undertaking. I was thoroughly convinced of the vanity of human knowledge, when a few days after the tradeſmen and my landlord, apprized of this adventure, waited on me with a moſt malicious ſneer, which highly inſulted the dignity of a Philoſopher. The latter, to whom I was indebted in a few pounds for board and lodging, taking compaſſion of my pitiful ſituation, inſtead of throwing me into a goal, led me to Bethlehem-Hoſpital, where I was joined to a German chemiſt, who had ſpent his whole ſubſtance in queſt of the grand affair. My pride was mortified at the ſight of this deluded man, who by force of argument, and the ſmoak of charcoal, had ſo intoxicated his brain, that his mouth continually uttered the word *Gold*, his eyes ſaw nothing elſe, and his feet trod on a gold pavement; all which was operated by a long ſtaff, which he waved in his right hand.

As ſoon as my vapours were diſſipated, I recovered my Liberty, with this advantage from my curious obſervations, that I had acquired an uncommon knowledge in the art of healing, which for ſome time proved highly beneficial to my fellow-creatures, and to the broken Alchymiſt. But the moſt uſeful inventions are liable to abuſe. My incomparable remedy for the ſecret diſorder, by miſapplication has ruined more conſtitutions than Dr. R----. My ſpecific drops againſt the gout, have been counterfeited and retailed by an Empyric, in all rheumatic complaints, aſthmas, coughs, hyſterics, &c. Theſe impoſitions and accidents have long troubled my imagination with the frightful ſpectres of many hundreds, whoſe death I have innocently contrived. To baniſh theſe unpleaſureable ideas, I have followed of late, a quite different ſyſtem of life, and

reunite

reunite in one perſon the various characters of Spectator, Tatler, Connoiſſeur, and Adam Fitz-Adam. Whatever various occurrences may preſent themſelves, I ſhall not fail to communicate to the grateful public.

*** In order to oblige ſuch of my relations, as chooſe to promote my work. Mr. POTTINGER, my publiſher, at the *Dunciad* in Pater-noſter-Row, has, in alluſion to his own ſign, and to the fable of Apuleius, placed a *Golden Aſs* in his ſhop, to receive their offerings; and I doubt not but their contributions will make his *Aſs* as famous for its wit, as *Button's Lion* was for its eloquence.